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# NT 520 New Testament Introduction

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Spring 2004

ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
Department of New Testament

NT 520 New Testament Introduction. 3 hours, Wang

Course Description:

This course is intended to introduce the student to the scholarly study of the New Testament. It will cover a) the historical background of the New Testament; b) a history of critical study of the New Testament and evaluation of these theories; c) the various methods used in scholarly study of the New Testament (historical, source, form, redaction, rhetorical criticism, etc.); d) the text and the formation of the New Testament canon; e) questions of introduction about NT books (authorship, date, etc.); f) the content of the NT books; g) elementary exegesis and hermeneutics.

The content of the course will be covered by a) lectures; b) text books.

Course Objectives:

1. To acquire a knowledge of the historical development of critical studies of the New Testament since the Enlightenment to the present and its significance for pastoral leadership.
2. To appropriate a basic knowledge of the various genres of the literature of the New Testament, questions of Canon and Text of the New Testament, Synoptic problem, historical and critical introduction to the books of the New Testament. This will help students better understand the biblical and Wesleyan conception of the Gospel. Since the Bible, and particularly the New Testament, is the foundation of all theological enterprises, this lays a good foundation for all theological pursuits.
3. To become acquainted with history of New Testament times, and how the cultural contextualization of the New Testament relates to the global, multi-ethnic, cross-cultural nature of the church and its ministry.
4. To understand the various criticisms used in New Testament studies and to evaluate them. This ability to evaluate theories is very important in studying other courses in theological curriculum and humanities in general.

Having completed this course, students should be able:

- to articulate how one's beliefs about Scripture impinge on how one engages biblical texts in interpretation;
- to identify a range of questions (e.g., historical, literary, canonical) that might be addressed to particular New Testament texts and explore those questions in the process of interpreting particular New Testament texts;

- to identify significant, critical resources for New Testament study and deploy those sources critically in New Testament study;
- to probe the interplay of theology and ethics in the various New Testament writers;
- to demonstrate awareness of the significance of the original languages for understanding and interpreting the New Testament; and
- to integrate these concerns and methodologies in a sound hermeneutical method.

Text Books:

Required:

Achtemeier-Green-Thompson, New Testament, Its Literature and Theology

Green, Joel B. ed., Hearing the New Testament, Strategies for Interpretation

Marshall, I Howard, I Believe in Historical Jesus

Collateral:

Ferguson, Everett, Background of Early Christianity, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. \_\_\_\_\_

Helpful References:

The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, ed. by J. B. Green et. al.

Articles: Form criticism; Gospels (genre); Gospels (historical reliability);

Historical Jesus, Quest; Jesus in non-Christian sources; Literary criticism;

Myth; Narrative exegesis; Redaction criticism; Rhetorical criticism; Sociological approaches to the Gospels; Synoptic problem; Synoptics and John; Textual criticism.

The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, ed. by G. F. Hawthorne et. al.

Articles: Apocalypticism; Authority; Chronology of Paul; Hermeneutics; Letter

Forms; Old Testament in Paul; Paul and his Interpreters; Paul in Acts and

Letters; Paul in early Church tradition; Rhetorical criticism; Social scientific approaches to Paul; Textual criticism.

Reading Schedule:

Read Hearing the New Testament: 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> week

Read I Believe in Historical Jesus 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> week

Read New Testament, Its Literature and Theology: 5<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> week

Read Background of Early Christianity: 1<sup>st</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> week

Class participation:

It is expected that the student will consistently attend and be adequately prepared to participate in class sessions by reading the pertinent sections of the text books. In order to maintain integrity with those who are faithful to the learning covenant, unexcused absences of 10-20 % class sessions will result in 1 grade-level reduction of the final course grade (A/A-). Unexcused absence of 20-30% class sessions will result in 2 grade-level reduction of the final course grade, etc.

Papers:

A few brief interpretive/exegetical papers will be required. Each paper will not take more than 2 hours to write. These papers are designed to help student practice elementary exegesis. The detailed instructions on these assignments will be given in the class.

A book review (about 5 pages) of I Believe in the Historical Jesus will be required.

Due date: Tuesday, March 16, 2004

A **concise** paper of about 7-8 pages (**typed, double spaced**) will be required. The paper should be developed within the following parameters:

1. Select a clearly defined topic or area of **critical New Testament studies**.
2. Research the topic or area, reading at least 200 pages.
3. The paper should:
  - a. Define the topic or area (about half a page).
  - b. Identify the position of the sources (about a page).
  - c. Critique the position of the sources, by indicating their presuppositions, strengths/weaknesses (about 2 pages).
  - d. Present and defend your position (about 2 page).
  - e. Indicate the impact of the issue and your study on your own spiritual life and your ministry (about half a page).
  - f. Provide proper foot notes or end notes.
4. Due Date: Tuesday, April 20, 2004

Grade Contract:

If a student fulfills all the requirements mentioned above, the highest course grade he/she can achieve will be B+. Students are encouraged to submit additional works to improve their course grade. Some possibilities are (but not limited to) research papers, additional readings (**with appropriate note taking, report and evaluation**), lesson plans (**with objectives, outlines, exact sources including specific page numbers so that an intelligent lay person can use your material, without further research, to teach**) charts, etc. This is an opportunity for the student to design his/her own learning experience, which will be most helpful to his/her life and ministry.

Additional project Due Date: Thursday, May 8, 2002

Course Outlines:

- I. Historical Development of Critical New Testament Studies
  - David F. Strauss
  - Ferdinand C. Baur
  - William Wrede
  - History of Religions School
  - Mystery Religions

- Gnosticism
- Wilhelm Bousset
- Rudolf Bultmann—Demythologizing
- New Quest of Historical Jesus
- Recent development

## II. Canon and Text of the New Testament

## III. Gospels

- Nature of Gospel
- Synoptic Problem
- Form Criticism
- Redaction Criticism
- Tradition Criticism
- Literary Criticism
- Synoptic and Johannine Gospels
- Critical Introduction to the Individual Gospel

## IV. Acts

## V. Epistles

- Nature, Functions of Epistles
- Critical Introduction to the Individual Epistles

## VI. Apocalyptic Literature

- Nature of Apocalyptic Literature
- Critical Introduction to the Book of Revelation
- Interpretations of the Book of Revelation

## VII. New Testament History

- Life of Jesus
- History of the Early Church